*Anna Mayevskaya*

**“Shift in traditional moral values: common problems of two different countries”**

**Contents**

*Preface*

Introduction

1. Moral values and their sources
2. Universal moral values
3. Shift in traditional values

- Britain

- Russia

1. Factors that caused dramatic change in values
2. Who or what is to blame? What can be done?

Conclusion

*Epilogue*

References

**Preface**

*Thinking about values in my life a situation from the past comes to my mind. Don’t expect me telling you anything extraordinary, nothing to be too proud of. Ten years agoI was a FLEX alumus. To become a finalist you had to fulfill several tests examoning your English skills (probably not just English, but also psychological readiness to leave your home country and go somewhere abroad for a pretty long time period) and to succeed at the personal interview. I don’t remember the whole process in detail but one moment is still so fresh in my mind, like it was yesterday. The examiner asked me: “How do you think, what’s the most important personal characteristic?” Time shortage and apprehensiveness didn’t let me think thoroughly, the only word at that very moment was popping up in my head – it was honesty. For that moment I was happy I did answer something reasonable, but afterwards I started thinking why honesty was the characteristic that came to my mind so easily. I came to the conclusion that there were several reasons for that. First one is that I was brought up in such a manner, I was always told by my mom and my grandma what is good and what is bad. Core value orienteers are usually given by the family. Second factor is my school teacher, she didn’t just teach, she educated us, giving many moral codes for future living. And third, the last, but not the least important is religion. I’m a Russian Orthodox Christian, christened since early childhood. Owing to my grandma I knew the main Orthodox canons. Now let me turn to the main subject of my report – values.*

**Introduction**

Traditional values have two important components – tradition and values. Traditional values are understood as beliefs or moral guidelines passed down from generation to generation within a specific community. Traditional values’ contents may vary in different communities and cultures. However, researchers often point at such institutions as religion and the family to be the most important in traditional value systems.

Unfortunately in today’s world an enormous value is given the material prosperity of a man, but not to his moral and spiritual consistence, integrity. Moral values are losing their significance; all we want to know about is personal prosperity and the bank account.

1. **Moral values and their sources**

Moral values are the standards of good and evil, which govern an individual’s behavior and choices. Individual’s morals may derive from society and government, religion, or self.

Government promotes morality of law which divides onto “morality of duty” and “morality of aspiration”. The morality of duty consists of basic proscriptions (e.g. against murder of theft) - required by any governmental authority. There are certain types of rules that must be obeyed in the whole society (e.g. to respect the person and property of others), otherwise the disobedience would be punished.

Morality of aspiration is that conception of moral principles to which humans ought to aspire. It’s the higher standard of morality, to which both churches and individuals hope to conform, and which people hope to impart to their children. Aspirational morality was once the exclusive province of the church outside the jurisdiction of state.

Religionis another source of moral values. Most religions have built-in lists of do’s and don’ts, a set of codes by which its adherents should live. There is no official religion in the Russian Federation, but it demonstrates comfortable interaction of four traditional religious communities –Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism-with each other and with the state. Nevertheless, most believers in Russia are Christians in the form of Orthodoxy. Islam is the second most common religion in Russia. All religions in Russia are declared equal before the law. Government interference in religion is prohibited. The country is by law a secular state without a state religion. The preamble to the 1997 Law, however, acknowledges Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and other religions as constituting an inseparable part of the country's historical heritage and also recognized the "special contribution" of Orthodoxy to the country's history and to the establishment and development of its spirituality and culture.In today`s Russia Orthodox Church is closely partnered with the state and is often treated as a political, cultural and educational actor. It provides intellectual and moral support to many state policies.

Despite falling numbers, Christianity remained the largest religion in England and Wales with 59.3% of the population identifying themselves as Christian. Muslims made up the second largest religious group with 4.8% of the population. Between 2001 and 2011 there has been a decrease in the proportion of people who identify as Christian and an increase in those reporting to have no religion. However, churches continue to play an important role in British society. The overall profile of religion in the UK has become far more diverse. Most importantly, the form of religion and the way in which people are religious has changed: there is much more individual choice and selection, less traditional ‘belonging’, and religion supports a much wider range of identities.

Moral values also derive from within one’s own self. Young people learn their moral values in the process of growing up. As children we all are taught the main principles of life through fairytales, proverbs in childhood or just everyday upbringing and considering different life examples. The choices that are made by an individual from childhood to adulthood are between forbidden and acceptable, kind or cruel, generous or selfish. A person may, under any given set of circumstances, decide to do what is forbidden. If this individual possesses moral values, going against them usually produces guilt.

Many traditional values such as helping in times of trouble, mutual support, sharing of information are taught in public institutions such as schools, the health service, the media, the police, and other civil society organizations.

1. **Universal moral values**

Most of the values which can be found in the laws or moral codes of all the major religions are ingredients of the Golden Rule - “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. A political version of the Golden Rule was declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” affirmed the dignity, equality, and freedom (from tyranny, fear, and torture) of all the people.

In 1993, a world conference of 250 international religious leaders met in Chicago and produced a document titled “Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic”. In it they reaffirmed the UN declaration and referred to the Golden Rule as the one fundamental overriding principle. They then developed a list of corollary principles that included not only the respect and concern for human life but other life forms and the environment as well. They praised the virtues of honesty and the pursuit of truth and called for a nonviolent approach to world problems. They condemned aggression, hatred, injustice, and discrimination.

In the book of the International Religious Foundation titled “World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts” it was concluded that the principles of justice, compassion, and forgiveness were universal.

*The short list of universal moral values (four major categories and more specific values):*

1. Commitment to something greater than oneself

* To recognize the existence of and be committed to Supreme Being
* To seek the Truth
* To seek Justice

1. Self-respect, but with humility, self-discipline, and acceptance of personal responsibility

* To respect and care for oneself
* To not exalt oneself or overindulge – to show humility and avoid gluttony, greed, or other forms of selfishness or self-centeredness
* To act in accordance with one’s conscience and to accept responsibility for one’s behavior

1. Respect and caring for others (i.e., the Golden Rule)

* To recognize the connectedness between all people
* To serve humankind and to be helpful to individuals
* To be caring, respectful, compassionate, tolerant, and forgiving of others
* To not hurt others (e.g., do not murder, abuse, steal from, cheat, or lie to others)

1. Caring for other living things and the environment
2. **Shifts in values**

We all know what it should be like, nevertheless today’s selfishness and lack of concern for others is increasing. We observe problems in following moral values whether they are in the form of social rules and norm or governmental laws.

Values change dramatically in Britain. Things that caused outrage a generation ago are now celebrated. Until 1967, British men were imprisoned for having sex with other men; forty years later, gay marriage is enthusiastically covered in recently-homophobic tabloid newspapers.

The decrease of marriage between heterosexual couples, and the existence of marriage between homosexual couples; the increasing number of children living with just one parent; the millions of able-bodied people paid by the state to be idle; the disappearance of deference; the empty churches on Sundays, everything that was held most dear– the family, marriage, the monarch and the value of hard work – are decimating.

Causing most concern – there has been an unprecedented in history collapse of the traditional nuclear family. This is true across Europe, but is most acute in the UK. Fewer people get married than most other EU countries, and those who do are the most likely to get divorced – the UK has the highest proportions of marriages that fail (absolute divorce rates are not so bad only because fewer people get married in the first place). The UK has the highest proportion of single parent families in Europe, at 24 per cent.

In some of the more heavily-populated urban areas of the UK, family life is completely unrecognisable. In some areas of the country, family life in the old sense no longer exists.

No one can trust anyone anymore, there are no longer any shared values,no respect and strangers now have to be regarded as enemies rather than friends. Mutual respect and understanding and recognition of our common humanity cannot be nurtured in isolation.

Nevertheless compared to one, two or three hundred years ago, not just people’s lives, but their values now are almost incomparably better. Catholics have been emancipated, women liberated and the poor enfranchised. Children of unmarried parents and single mothers are no longer shunned, homosexuals no longer imprisoned, girls no longer left uneducated, black people no longer banned from shops, and poor people are no longer left to die.

Britons are healthier, wealthier, wiser (or at least better educated) and freer. Most people alive now are the most privileged that have ever lived. They are the first generation with no need to fear pestilence, famine, absolute poverty or tyranny.

The historical increase in tolerance and fairness is a definite improvement in British values. Clearly there have been many moral improvements since the 1950s, such as the rise of tolerance to those who are different, the continuing emancipation of women and the decline in the taboo about homosexuality and pre-marital sex.

The contemporary Russian family differs from the traditional family due to its high number of divorces, children born outside of registered marriage, cohabitations without official registration, orphans, too few extended or stem families, and a high degree of "mutual estrangement of spouses". Russia’s internal political discourse is dominated by a single theme: a ‘return to traditional family values.’ According to Russia’s leading ideologues, the traditional family – the foundation of the Russian state – is threatened by feminism, LGBT liberation ,which herald the destruction of public morality and marriage.

The Russian family can hardly be characterized as traditional or conservative. Moreover, the very notion of the Russian family is problematic due to Russia’s ethnical, cultural, religious and regional diversity. Based on Soviet family law, the 1995 Family Code defines marriage as a free contract, proclaims freedom of marriage, equality of spouses and equal rights and responsibilities of parents towards children as its central principles. Marriage is also a heterosexual union, and remains a secular institution. Discrimination based on race, class, nationality, language and religion is prohibited. Taken together, these principles represent a modern understanding of the family union as a civil contract between free and equal individuals of different genders.

At the same time, research into family values has suggested that family values and the family have been important for Russians. Based on the European Values Study, Fabrikant and Magun have concluded that Russians exhibit a medium to high level of conservatism in respect to family values, especially in such aspects as having children in marriage and the importance of family and motherhood for women. Furthermore, Russians are less conservative in respect to single mothers and abortions, being rather understanding of both. Most strikingly, Russian attitudes to homosexuality have become more liberal in the past 25 years.

World Values Survey results for Russia (2014) show that with regard to two important institutions, the family and religion, the position of Russians did not change much between the 1990s and 2014. On the other hand, religion has become more important, with a 10 % increase in those seeing religion as somewhat important. Meanwhile, the importance of family life has remained at the same high level. Russians tolerated all forms of family unions with the exception of same-sex couples (54 % saw homosexuality as never justifiable and 20 % said it had a low level of justifiability).

The views of Russians on the position of women in the family and the balance between work and caring for one’s children differ significantly from the traditional view that women should be restrained within the family sphere. Russians do not think the children of mothers who work, suffer from this or that when a wife makes more money than her husband it causes problems. Furthermore, both abortions and divorces are considered justifiable in certain circumstances, as is sex before marriage. Violence within the family (spousal, against children and other people) is seen as never justifiable.

The picture that emerges represents rather modern attitude to family values. This becomes clearer in the context of wider social values. When it comes to what the aims of the country should be, the absolute majority of Russians look toward economic growth. Therefore, people would clearly prefer to have a good family life in a rich country with secure jobs and a chance to influence community matters.

1. **The factors that have caused dramatic change in values.**

It’s important to mention that relevant EU law stayed the same, the European Convention on Human Rights was the same, and the European Court of Human Rights was the same. Nevertheless values are changing sufficiently rapidly. Attitudes to sexuality, lone-parenthood, marriage, race, welfare benefits, violent crime have all been transformed. Why?

Changes in values are often caused by social changes, which are usually driven by technological and economic changes; sometimes values change simply as a result of increased knowledge.

For example first-cousin marriage is still legal in the UK, but it has become shameful due to the awareness of people of the medical dangers of consanguinity. Though, centuries ago it was widely practiced among the aristocracy. It was a great way to preserve familial status and wealth. The realization of the fact that most of the fears about consequences of homosexuality proved are unfounded has led to its legalization.

The dramatic rise in immigration has turned a largely monocultural society to a multicultural one. Belief in mainstream Christianity is challenged by exposure to many other religions. There is no single religion unifying the country, but a number of different religions, each with its own and often startlingly different value system.

The causes of family decline range from the decline of religion to the rise in financial independence for women, the lack of a father figure, of a stable home environment, and of an inculcated sense of right and wrong.

Our generation takes everything for granted and most of us don`t think we have the responsibilities to others – such as caring for elderly relatives, raising children in a stable environment, or working if you are able, even if it means doing jobs you don’t like. People only think about their own concerns without thinking about the impact of their actions on society around them.Children no longer feel that they have to make sacrifices looking after their parents because they know the state will do it. People don’t feel it a duty to help vulnerable people because they know their taxes pay for public workers whose job it is to do that.

Technology too has done its part in promoting individualism, eroding conversation and shared

experiences. We no longer have to make music together in social gatherings because we have

it electronically recorded. We don’t have to interact with others when we play because we can play with computers. We no longer have to watch the same film in the cinema as our whole community because we all have televisions at home; we no longer have to watch with our family because we all have TVs in our bedrooms; we no longer watch the same programs as others because of multi-channel TV. We no longer even have to listen to the radio or music on public transport, as we all have MP3 players plugged into our ears. The rise of text messages and emails has eroded the most fundamental communication of all, talking face to face. We order online at home and no longer have to talk to a shop assistant or a cashier in the shops. We don’t get our money from human, but from ATMs.

1. **Who or what is to blame? What can be done?**

Most respondents in the social evils consultation blamed the government, media, religion and big business for today’s social evils. How many respondents nominated themselves as the sources of some of the problems –very few.

The first step we should take is to analyze what changes have been for the good and what for the bad. There are many things we wouldn’t want to change because the benefits they bring are so large. We don’t want to uninvent female emancipation, even if the earlier lack of freedom of women meant fewer families broke up. We can’t uninvent television, social nets and so on.

Behavior change can be influenced by a change in culture, but a change in culture is difficult to achieve. Nevertheless there are many things we can do, not least start talking about it. Politicians can try to bring national attention to some of the important moral issues, put more emphasis on responsibilities rather than rights (such as the responsibility to do community work if you want to receive unemployment benefit). We have an open society that talks about and confronts its problems in a generally honest manner, which is the first step to making things better.

A sphere of moral education should focus on traditional values and government should bring in the citizens of respect for them and teach them. We should talk more about basic moral principles at home in the family and at school. School is not just to teach, it is to educate. We all should analyze whether out behavior is consistent with the moral codex.

**Conclusion**

All societies have problems at all phases of their history, and the task is to understand and cope with them, accepting that the complexity, diversity, and benefits of social living carry a cost which we do our best to minimize. The responsibility of each member of society to play a part in confronting difficulties, and the first step is working out whether they really are difficulties and, if so, what each of us individually, and all of us collectively, can do about them.

According to The Prevent strategy 2011 the fundamental British values are the value of democracy, values of universal human rights, the rule of law, individual liberty, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs , full participation in society.

According to the Strategy of development of education in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025 spiritual and moral values prevailing in the process of cultural development in Russia are: humanity, justice, honor, conscience, will, personal dignity, in good faith, the desire to fulfill a moral duty to himself, his family and his Fatherland.

I hope that these lofty aims of two great countries will not be just written on paper, but also become fundamental principles of our lives.

**Epilogue**

*While preparing this report I`ve read many articles about Russia written by foreigners. It was interesting to me to find out about existing image of Russia, the image which is believed to be true by the rest of the world. And I was really shocked by some of the papers, and attitude of the authors towards our country. In this report I would like to remind to all the people reading it - no matter what nationality, religion, social class, tribe or group we belong to – we all are humans, equal and unique, and we live together in the same world, sharing one planet, we finally need to learn to respect each other’s personality, beliefs and views. We speak different languages, have different history and observe different traditions, but the core life principles are the same worldwide.*

**References**

1. http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/moral-values-faq.htm
2. https://ru.glosbe.com/en/ru/Religion in Russia
3. http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/
4. http://www.solarnavigator.net/animal\_kingdom/humans/single\_parent\_families.htm
5. Federation till 2025 (public project)] (2013). Available at: http://goo.gl/J3kwxg
6. Kinner R. A short list of universal moral values, Conceiling and values (2000), Vol.45
7. *Muravyeva* M. Traditional values and modern families:legal understanding of tradition and moderniry on contemporary Russia, Journal of social and policy studies,12 (4): 625-637
8. The Prevent strategy 2011: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011>
9. World Values Survey 1981–2014 (2014) Official Aggregate v.20090901. World Values Survey Association. Madrid: ASEP/JDS.
10. Wuthnow R. (2008) The Sociological Study of Values. *Sociological Forum*, 23 (2):333-343.